

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, November 15, 2000, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the U.S. Navy. A list of action items resulting from the meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to address items of importance as summarized in the previously distributed meeting agenda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

After welcoming the participants, Mr. Ingersoll called the meeting to order. He then directed the committee's attention to assessor training issues as highlighted on the meeting agenda, which had been distributed electronically prior to the meeting.

**UNRESOLVED ISSUE - ASSESSOR TRAINING**

Mr. Ingersoll identified as an unresolved issue from the Sixth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 6i) the amount of time permitted for accrediting authorities to make certain that their assessors are properly trained. The existing time constraints are two years for basic training and four years for technical training. Mr. Ingersoll pointed out that some commenters at NELAC 6i considered these times are too long while other commenters considered them too short, especially in light of funding issues. Committee members noted that any changes to the NELAC Standard would not become effective until 2003.

It was suggested that no state should be allowed to be an accrediting authority without accredited assessors and that the individuals examining an applicant state's system as part of the application process could also review the state's assessor training program and interview the state's assessors to verify that they are properly trained. It was also suggested that the NELAC Standard be changed to specify that at the time that an accrediting authority is recognized, all assessors must have passed the basic assessor training examination.

This raised the questions of what constitutes a NELAC assessor and of whether all assessors or a sufficient number of assessors must have passed the basic assessor training examination. In subsequent discussion of the issue, committee members noted that assessors are permitted to take a technical specialist along on assessments for input and that the technical specialist does not have to be fully trained in the NELAC Standard. It was suggested that the NELAC assessor is the assessment team member who is assessing the laboratory against the NELAC Standard and who is responsible for making decisions as to whether or not the laboratory meets the NELAC requirements. There was some discussion of whether this also constitutes a lead assessor. The committee decided to revisit the definitions of lead assessor and technical specialist and to prepare proposed language for input to the

Chapter 6 Accrediting Authority Committee. Ms. Rosanna Buhl accepted the assignment of drafting proposed language.

The committee engaged in discussion of what would happen if one accrediting authority deems a second accrediting authority's training courses to be unacceptable. A committee member expressed the opinion that until such time that the national laboratory accreditation effort as a whole establishes some program that carries out the administrative function of evaluating and approving assessor training courses, we will have the potential for such a situation. The committee member acknowledged that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has no mechanism or resources to carry out this function. In discussion of such a conflict, the committee noted that the first course of action would be for the two accrediting authorities to resolve the issue between themselves. If they were unable to resolve the issue, then the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) or National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Director would step in to mediate. Since NELAC has no mechanism for approving assessor training courses, it was suggested that the NELAC On-site Assessment Committee could issue a standard test which would be centrally graded. It was suggested that the committee move its focus from Appendix A to designing a standard bank of test questions for the basic assessor training examination.

Subsequent discussion turned to the test administered in the Global Institute of Environmental Scientists (GIES) offering of the pilot assessor training course. Ms. Marlene Moore noted that she received useful input after the course offering and that the pilot course needs to be adapted in response to this input. Committee members suggested that a keyed test would be administered with a code assigned by the accrediting authority and that test results would be maintained by the accrediting authority. In discussion of a standardized test, Ms. Moore noted that the design of the test with the bank of test questions is easy. The bigger questions are who will administer the test and who will keep the key. There was much committee discussion of confidentiality issues and of a possible ethics statement for testers.

#### **APPENDIX A (BASIC TRAINING) SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

Mr. Ingersoll requested a volunteer to take the lead on behalf of the On-site Assessment Committee in coordinating with Dr. Ken Jackson and Dr. Margo Hunt on Appendix A. Ms. Moore agreed to coordinate with Dr. Jackson and Dr. Hunt and suggested that the committee focus on what can be done between now and the deadline for submitting proposed revisions to the NELAC Standard to incorporate Appendix A into the Standard. Mr. Ingersoll reminded committee members that proposed revisions must be submitted to EPA by March 19, 2001.

#### **APPENDIX B-1 (STANDARD FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING COURSES)**

Mr. Ingersoll noted that he will send an electronic copy of Appendix B to Ms. Nancy Wentworth of EPA's Office of Environmental Information (OEI) for her comment. He noted that Ms. Wentworth and Mr. Joseph Slayton of EPA Region 3 offered several useful suggestions at NELAC 6i. Mr. Ingersoll highlighted two such suggestions from NELAC 6i - the inclusion of criteria for performance-

based measurement systems (PBMS) with the pertinent technology in its training course and a requirement for an examination at the conclusion of the course. In discussion of Appendix B-1, Mr. Jack Hall noted that he is waiting for input from Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor and Ms. Mimi Uhlfelder. Mr. Sotomayor and Ms. Uhlfelder have expressed their commitment to the development of the appendix.

#### **QUALITY SYSTEMS (QS) CHECKLIST UPDATE**

Mr. Charles Dyer reported that the assessment checklist based on Chapter 5 is in the hands of Ms. Uhlfelder. He noted that he will submit the checklist to the rest of the On-site Assessment Committee before their next (November 29) teleconference.

#### **TELECONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

The committee discussed its teleconference schedule and decided to alternate teleconferences between Wednesdays and Fridays. This modified schedule met with approval from committee members in attendance.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The meeting was adjourned as the allotted time for the teleconference expired at 2:00 p.m. EST. The committee's next meeting will be on November 29, 2000, via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**NOVEMBER 15, 2000**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Member</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Committee will draft proposed language on assessor training requirements for input to the Chapter 6 Accrediting Authority Committee.	R. Buhl	11/29/00
2.	Committee will focus on what can be done before the March 19 deadline for submitting proposed revisions to the NELAC Standard to incorporate Appendix A into the Standard.	M. Moore	03/19/01
3.	Committee will provide electronic copy of Appendix B to Ms. Nancy Wentworth for her review and comments.	W. Ingersoll	11/29/00
4.	Committee will incorporate comments received on Appendix B into the appendix.	J. Hall	11/29/00
5.	Committee will review updated QS Assessment checklist.	C. Dyer	11/29/00

**PARTICIPANTS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
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